

# Backpacking and Fly Fishing with Llamas in Wyoming

NOLS Rocky Mountain - Lander, Wyoming

July 12-18, 2026



## Features

- Seven days and six nights in the field
- Backcountry camping in the Wind River Mountains
- Opportunities for exceptional photography
- Options for fishing, non-technical peak ascents, and day hiking
- Hiking at elevations of 7,000'-11,000'
- Llama support allows lighter packs
- Approximately 18-mile route

**Cost:** \$2,155 (includes lodging pre/post trip)

**Max group size:** 12 Participants

**Minimum Age:** 10 (accompanied by an adult)

3 NOLS Instructor

**Historic Age Range:** 10-81

## Trip Description

NOLS has been running courses in the Wind River Range since 1965 and those mountains are your playground on this trip. This is the same wilderness that Paul Petzoldt chose for our first students and remains an incredible playground and classroom to this day. Whether you are returning to the Winds or experiencing them for the first time, this is a great trip for you.

This seven-day/six-night llama-supported trip provides NOLS grads, families, and guests an opportunity to reconnect with NOLS in the high country of the stunning Wind River Mountains. The short hiking route offers a moderate level of hiking with short travel days and longer day hike opportunities. This schedule allows for short distances with packs on but optional additional day hiking with an instructor, including possible non-technical peak ascents, for those looking for a bit more. Participants will enjoy fly-fishing in the Winds' many glacially formed lakes, wildlife, and scenic photography, and opportunities for learning about area ecology. Instructors will cover basic wilderness skills including navigation and LNT techniques, with backcountry cooking lessons done as instructor-led teams in a group kitchen.

The trip starts with an evening orientation at NOLS' historic Noble Hotel in the heart of Lander, Wyoming. You will spend some time getting to know your fellow expedition mates as well as going over the proposed trip route and talking about gear.

The next day you will have a chance to rent gear from the NOLS Equipment room, pack food then head for the mountains. The first night we'll camp near the road, dial in our camp systems, and maybe practice some fishing at a nearby lake. The llamas will come to join us the following morning.

For the next 6 days and 5 nights, you will camp out under the stars, hike, fish, and cook in the company of your expedition team (including llamas!). On the last day, we'll head back to the road where we will meet up with our transportation back into town. A celebratory dinner out in Lander will be the last evening before folks head out the next day for home or more adventures elsewhere.

Llama packing offers the chance to lighten the group's packs by carrying team gear and food. Participants will still carry some gear as well, but the Llamas help us shoulder the load. Llamas are native to South America's Andes region and are accustomed to high altitude travel. They have a long history as pack animals in North America and are ideally suited to backcountry travel due to their low impact. Llamas have a low-key disposition and are easy to handle. Past trip participants often bond closely with their llamas and consider them an integral part of the group dynamic.

## **Environment**

The Wind River Mountains offer a variety of terrain—wooded trails, mountain lakes, flowery meadows, and expansive granite slabs. Moose, elk, mule deer, and coyotes live in the area and are often seen by quiet watchers at dawn and dusk. Black bears frequent the range. The majority of our hiking will be done on established trails with limited signage. In addition, the weather this time of year can be variable including hot sunny days or several days of wet, overcast weather. Mosquitoes can be tenacious, especially early and late in the day. The route, team, and topography lend themselves to many optional activities—day hiking, fly-fishing, reading, taking photographs, baking, or learning plant identification. Sharing NOLS backcountry activities with friends and family creates fantastic lifetime memories. We will have layover days to focus on optional activities.

## **NOLS Staff**

Our staff are employees of NOLS and trained and certified accordingly. This means they maintain certifications in wilderness medicine and are trained to NOLS' high standards in risk management. They are senior staff at NOLS who have spent years working and teaching in backcountry environments all over the world. Additionally, our staff specializes in bringing together groups of strangers and building the group culture and camaraderie that makes NOLS trips great.

## **A Day in the Life**

You will start your day with a casual breakfast followed by packing up camp and loading up your pack and the Llamas. Hiking for each moving day will be relatively short and usually take half the day or less. Lunches both on the trail or in camp are casual and consist more of snacking and eating trail food than a sit-down meal together as a group. Once you arrive in your next camp location, you will get the tents up, Llamas secure, and maybe spend a bit of time fishing or day hiking before dinner. The group will share dinner in camp before drifting off to bed or spending some time reading or fishing before it gets too dark.

Throughout the trip meal prep and cleanup duties are shared with the team. Your instructors will drive the show but everyone is expected to pitch in a bit to help with all of the camp functions.

## Difficulty Scale

This trip is rated 2 out of 5 on our difficulty scale.



We use a difficulty scale to help participants evaluate if a trip is right for them. It considers probable weather conditions, physicality of activities, and food and accommodations. You don't need to be a honed athlete, but pre-trip work to improve your strength, flexibility and endurance, is highly encouraged to improve your enjoyment of the place. If you have specific questions regarding physical preparation and your readiness please reach out to the Alumni Trips Department.

## Food on the trip

There will be plenty of food provided on the trip for everyone. We are happy to ensure that folks who have reasonable dietary needs and/or preferences are well taken care of throughout the entire trip. Listing those needs on your registration paperwork is critical for our success here.

If you would like to bring your own snacks along, that is highly encouraged. We all have treats that we enjoy and bringing something special is a great way to keep motivation high and not have to rely on the group's schedule for your munchies.

## Curriculum

This trip's curriculum focuses on traditional NOLS skills and practical llama handling. The trip format provides a chance for everyone to learn new skills and share in the education. Instructors will present information and techniques for the group to comfortably travel and camp in the wilderness. Additional topics like backcountry baking, fly-fishing, flower identification, and leadership can also be presented to those interested.

Alumni trips are more relaxed than typical NOLS courses; however, it is not a vacation or a guided trip. Trips are self-reliant expeditions through remote wilderness areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the trip, you live outdoors, prepare your own meals, and care for yourself and the team. The expedition format emphasizes hands-on learning and the application of new skills in a variety of situations.

All participants will complete and submit application materials, including a medical history form/exam either reviewed by a medical professional or self-reported. These forms highlight the intersection of your trip's anticipated physical rigor and your current health and fitness status. Your forthright and timely completion and submission of the forms set you and your trip up for success in the outdoors.

## Expectations of Participants

The alumni trip atmosphere is more relaxed than a typical NOLS course; however, it is not a guided trip—we call it an educational, participatory vacation. Alumni trips are self-reliant adventures through remote areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the course, you will live outdoors, help to prepare meals, and care for yourself. The expedition emphasizes hands-on learning and the application of new skills in a variety of situations.

Unlike our standard expeditions, Alumni trips do allow electronics and alcohol for those that are of legal age in the country of the trip. We believe that these luxuries can add to a course experience and local flavor. Excessive alcohol consumption is not a part of the culture of Alumni trips.

## Trip Itinerary

July 11	<p>There will be an orientation meeting at 6:00 p.m. At the Noble Hotel in Lander, please arrive no later than this afternoon.</p> <p>You will be staying at NOLS' hotel this evening in hostel style rooms with a shared bathroom in the hallway and we provide all the bedding you need. We will ensure that families stay together and those that aren't traveling with others will be roomed up based on their identified gender.</p>
July 12	<p>Start the day with an early breakfast and then you will review gear and rent anything that you need in a visit to the NOLS Rocky Mountain campus. You might help bag up rations as well before heading into the mountains around lunch.</p>
July 13-17	<p>Hike, fish, explore, and enjoy each other's company in the backcountry.</p>
July 18	<p>Pickup at the trailhead in the mid-morning. Return to Lander, clean and return gear, and eat dinner out to celebrate the week. Lodging is provided this night as well at the Noble Hotel but if you would like to book a hotel in town on your own, just let us know.</p> <p>If you drive to Lander, you are welcome to depart this day after we are done.</p>
July 19	<p>Participants travel homeward. Please plan to depart this morning.</p>

## Travel Logistics

### Getting to Lander

#### By Plane:

The commercial airport nearest to Lander is Riverton (RIW). You can book a contiguous flight into Riverton on United's website. Flight schedules are always evolving and if the only one available is a late night arrival, we suggest arriving a day earlier to ensure you don't miss the start of the trip.

There is a shuttle service from the Riverton airport to Lander and the NOLS Hotel (Noble Hotel) offered by WRTA (<http://www.wrtabuslines.com>). The cost ranges from \$25–60, depending on the number of passengers, and a reservation is always required. If Share-A-Ride, WRTA are unavailable or not your style, you can contact **BDS Taxi** (307-840-0954), which requests 24 hours advance notice or [Gator Creek Taxi](#) out of Riverton.

Jackson Hole (JAC), and Casper, Wyoming (CPR), as well as Salt Lake City, Utah (SLC), and Denver, CO (DEN) are all viable airports. You'll need to utilize a rental car for any of these airports.

#### By Car:

Lander is a 4.5-hour drive from Salt Lake, 2.5 hours from Casper or Jackson Hole, and 6 hours from Denver. Look up Lander on Google maps for detailed directions. It may be the most cost-effective to fly to one of these airports and then rent a car for the week.

### **Lodging (if you arrive early)**

There are other lodging options in Lander including free camping at the City Park, camping for a fee in Sinks Canyon State Park, and other hotels and bed and breakfast inns. For additional lodging information, contact the Lander Chamber of Commerce at 800-433-0662 or visit their website at [www.landerchamber.org](http://www.landerchamber.org). We recommend the following two hotels:

#### **Pronghorn Lodge**

150 E. Main Street  
307-332-3940

#### **Inn at Lander**

260 Grand View Drive  
307-332-284

If you choose to book your own lodging for the last night of the trip, NOLS will not refund any of the tuition and the expense will be yours.

### **If you are delayed:**

If you have any problems on arrival day, please leave a message at 307.335.2265, the front desk at the NOLS Noble Hotel. Also, contact the NOLS Alumni office at [alumni@nols.edu](mailto:alumni@nols.edu) and (800) 332-4280.

### **Travel Insurance**

Travel insurance is worth exploring in case unforeseen events cause you to change your plans or if NOLS has to cancel a trip for any reason. Check with your personal insurance carrier and credit card to understand what you already might have or check out [cat70.com](http://cat70.com) for a wide variety of options.

### **Carbon Footprint and Offset**

Current estimates are that the Travel Industry accounts for ~8% of global emissions. This percentage includes everything from transportation to accommodation and shopping. NOLS recognizes that our business contributes to this problem but we do not have a comprehensive strategy at this point.

If you would like to offset part or all of the carbon emissions related to your Alumni trip, we recommend [South Pole](#). [Their calculator](#) can help easily calculate your footprint and choose a project to contribute to. [Here is a link to their calculator.](#)

### **Storage of Personal Belongings**

Personal belongings and vehicles may be stored at the NOLS facility for the duration of your course. Although we assume no responsibility, due care will be taken to prevent theft or damage to your stored items. Valuables may be checked into our safe. Parking is generally available on a NOLS lot for the duration of your course in an unfenced parking lot with little or no security.

### **Tipping**

While tipping is common in the outdoor guiding culture, your NOLS Instructors are not driven to excellence by tips but rather a love for taking people outdoors. You are welcome to tip the Instructors

if you choose, but many instructors are honored by [a donation in their name to the NOLS Annual Fund](#) which supports scholarships for future NOLS students.

## Trip Registration

The best way to register is through the trip information page on the [nols.edu](#) website. A non-refundable deposit secures your spot on the trip. If any issues arise, please call the NOLS Alumni Department at (800) 332-4280. Your enrollment is complete with receipt of your full tuition and your completed application forms; these are **due 60 days before the start of your trip**.

Your tuition includes meals starting with breakfast on the first day through dinner on the last day, all group equipment, camping gear (tents, stoves, kitchens, etc.), safety equipment, instruction, permits, and transportation to and from your lodging.

All participants are required to submit registration materials, including a medical form. These forms highlight the intersection of your trip's anticipated physical rigor and your current health and fitness status while also providing NOLS information about things like your dietary needs.

NOLS is not responsible for additional costs incurred by late arrivals or evacuations. Those expenses are the responsibility of trip participants and we recommend purchasing travel insurance to mitigate the impact of unforeseen circumstances.

*Do not book travel greater than 60 days before the start of the trip unless you have confirmed with NOLS that the trip will run. On rare occasions, we do cancel trips due to low enrollment.*

## Cancellation and Transfer Policy

For your reference, here is the [Alumni Trips Cancellation and Transfer Policy](#). When enrolling on a trip, you will need to agree to this policy.

## Suggested Readings

Ehrlich, Gretel. *The Solace of Open Spaces*. Paperback: 131 pages.

Kelsey, Joe. *Climbing and Hiking in the Wind River Mountains*. Paperback: 448 pages.

Kricher, John C. & Gordon Morrison. *Peterson Field Guides: Ecology of Western Forests*. Paperback: 554 pages.

Mathews, Daniel. *Rocky Mountain Natural History: Grand Teton to Jasper*. Paperback: 656 pages.

## Packing System

For this trip you will have 3 different options for the stuff you have.

1. A bag(s) that you leave behind at NOLS and do not bring into the backcountry with you.
2. Your hiking backpack that you carry with you.
3. The Llama saddle bags that we help carry some of the heavy gear and take weight out of the packs of our smallest bodied and/or least strong participants.

**Equipment List - available for rent “yes”  
Not available for rent “X”**

<b>Group Gear provided by NOLS</b>			
<b>Cooking Gear</b>	<b>Stoves, Fuel and Fuel Bottles</b>	<b>Tents or Shelters</b>	<b>Fishing gear (poles, flies, etc...)</b>
<b>Reference Books</b>	<b>Maps &amp; Compass</b>	<b>Repair Kits (Gear, Person, Food)</b>	<b>Satellite/Cell phone</b>

**Upper Body Clothing**

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Rent</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Mid- Weight Top (1-2)		Mid-weight top, wool or synthetic
Insulating Top	Yes	Heavy weight fleece or mid-weight puffy layer
Wind shirt (optional)	Yes	A lightweight, breathable, durable nylon wind shell, in either pullover or parka style
Rain jacket	X	A light waterproof jacket with a hood.
T-shirt (1-2)	X	A lightweight synthetic or wool t-shirt
Sports Bra or Tank (1-2)	X	Synthetic or wool sports bra or a synthetic sports tank
Liner Gloves	X	Good for cool evenings.
Warm Hat	Yes	Synthetic or wool.
Sun hat	X	Baseball cap or full brim.

**Lower Body Clothing**

Mid- Weight bottom	X	Mid-weight bottom, wool or synthetic
Wind/ Hiking pants	Yes	Breathable nylon wind pants or lightweight hiking pant, roomy enough to fit over lower body layers. We recommend renting NOLS windpants
Underwear (2-3 pairs)	X	Synthetic or wool are best.

**Footwear**

Boots or Hiking Shoes	X	Boots or sturdy hiking shoes. These should be broken in and well tested before the trip
Camp Shoes	X	Something light with a closed toe to wear around camp, crocs are great.
Socks (2-3 pairs)	X	½ crew to crew length wool socks.

**Miscellaneous Personal Gear**

Backpack	Yes	A Medium-sized pack (50L) is adequate for this trip
Day Pack	Yes	A lightweight day pack (10-15 L) is often handy for day hikes, summit attempts, or fishing excursions.
Sleeping Bag and stuff sack	Yes synthetic	Synthetic or down bags with a temperature rating of around 20° F
Sleeping Pad	Yes (foam)	A ¾ or full-length closed-cell foam or inflatable pad to insulate and pad between the ground and your sleeping bag.
Plastic Trash Bags (1-2)	X	One to two heavy-duty trash compactor bags (33-gallon) to help waterproof items in your pack. We sell them as singles so you don't need to buy a huge box.
Trekking Poles (optional)	X	Most participants enjoy hiking with 2 poles.
Insulated Mug	X	12 to 20 oz. insulated mugs with lids.
Bowl	X	A lightweight bowl with a snap or screw-on lid.
Spoon	X	Lexan spoons are light, durable, and popular.
Water Bottles	X	Bottles with a total capacity of at least 2 Liters.
Lip Balm (1-2)	X	SPF 15 or greater.
Sunscreen	X	SPF 30 or greater.
Bug repellent	X	The bugs can be bad in the Winds!
Sunglasses w/ retainer	X	Good-quality sunglasses with 100-percent UV protection
Headlamp	X	Bring spare batteries.
Lighter	X	Used for lighting your camp stove.
Toiletries	X	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, skin lotion, tampons, etc.
Watch	X	A watch with an alarm is a necessary item.
Notepad and Pencil/Pen	X	A small, lightweight pad is necessary for taking notes.
<b>Optional Items</b>		
Hydration System	X	Very handy and popular.
Pocket Knife	X	Not needed. Should you want to bring one, please choose a very small knife or multi-tool.
Book or e-reader	X	Bring something fun to read.
Camera	X	We would love to see your photos post-trip!
Thermos	X	Great for keeping morning drinks warm out at basecamp.
Camp Chair	X	Crazy Creek chair or something compact.
Coffee	X	We provide coffee for the trip, but if you want your own, Starbucks Via's are a great way to go.